

CONSERVATION UPDATE

As part of the Mississippi Flyway, wetlands in Alabama provide important winter habitat for waterfowl produced in the Prairie Pothole and Great Lakes regions. Ducks Unlimited's conservation priorities in Alabama are to restore wetlands through partnerships with federal and state agencies and to perpetually protect waterfowl habitat on public and private lands. To date, DU has partnered with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries to enhance and protect wetland habitats across Alabama, including projects on Mud Creek, Swan Creek, Mobile-Tensaw, Lowndes County and David K. Nelson wildlife management areas. These wildlife management areas located both in north and south Alabama serve as important winter habitat for the state's waterfowl population. While our restoration projects are often open to the public for hunting and other uses, these efforts benefit wildlife and people beyond waterfowl and those who pursue them. More than 900 species of wildlife utilize the habitats conserved through the work of Ducks Unlimited and its partners and people reap the benefits of recreational opportunities, enhanced water quality, improved flood control and increased groundwater recharge. Since DU's conservation programs began in Alabama, we have conserved more than 18,700 acres with the help of our many generous partners.



MAJOR SPONSOR REPORT

The Alabama State Campaign Committee secured 8 sponsor upgrades and 2 new feather society commitments in 2016. In addition, this team secured more than \$112,000 in new cash to benefit DU's highest conservation priorities. Clearly, major sponsors in Alabama are making a difference for the future of wetlands, waterfowl and waterfowl hunting.

Steve and Lucy Whatley of Anniston are two of ALDU's most dedicated sponsors. A 1979 flight from Atlanta to Los Angeles started Steve on his DU path. "Someone left a copy of the DU Magazine on the plane. I liked what I read and became a member immediately," Steve recounted.

The Whatleys have followed a steady road map over the past 35 years; membership, attending events, volunteering, Alabama state leadership, board of directors and President's Council. "We have met so many good people in DU, it just keeps us coming back," Steve said.

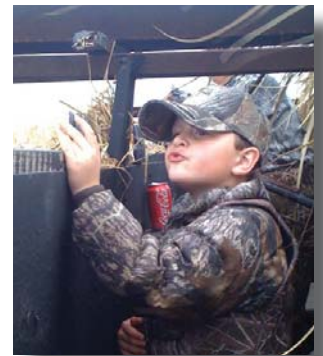
Steve and Lucy's support of the Preserve Our Prairies Initiative came after attending the Great Plains Prairie Experience. "It cemented my focus that the prairies are where DU needs to work. It is the most important area," Steve said. "DU is the organization I have the most passion for. I realize the value of my contributions by being a DU member and a duck hunter. It is easy to measure. You can see the wetlands preserved and the ducks using them."

Steve and Lucy hope to see the prairies look as good as they do now, and they would like even better if DU can preserve more. It was the desire to see DU do more that guided their most recent commitment. Steve and Lucy made an \$800,000 commitment to the Preserve Our Prairies Initiative, which will make them Alabama's first \$1-million sponsor and ensure DU can do more on the prairies.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT - WEISS LAKE

Alabama Power owns Weiss Lake northeast of Gadsden. As part of a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) project, Alabama Power is partnering with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to have a shallow water impoundment built within Weiss Lake on Pruett's Island. Alabama DCNR contacted Ducks Unlimited to partner with them to help survey, design and construct the roughly 80-acre moist soil impoundment by building levees, installing water control structures and a relief pump. After completion, Alabama DCNR plans to use the impoundment for youth waterfowl hunting.



VOLUNTEER FUNDRAISING REPORT

Volunteers are the heartbeat of Ducks Unlimited, and Alabama has some of the best. Alabama boasts 9,309 members, including 740 volunteers who hosted 63 events in 2016, raising nearly \$700,000 to support DU's conservation mission. Those dollars enable DU to complete extensive conservation work in Alabama and on the breeding grounds that produce Alabama's waterfowl.



Don and his wife, Alycia, enjoy the outdoors.

One such dedicated ALDU volunteer is Sgt. Donald Cuchens from Andalusia. Don has been a tremendous help for ALDU. As a recruiter for the Alabama Army National Guard, he has great insight into what motivates people to join and remain with a volunteer organization. As an avid duck hunter, angler and scuba diver, Don is extremely passionate about conserving Alabama's natural resources. He seeks to grow the Covington County chapter every year by recruiting new volunteers and by making the event a blast for those attending. Don is surrounded by awesome volunteers who work very well as a team. Don and his wife, Alycia, have three grown children and one grandchild.

SOUTHEAST WETLANDS INITIATIVE

Covering most of the southeastern US and encompassing many of the nation's most recognized wetlands, the Southeast Wetlands Initiative focuses on the restoration, enhancement and protection of wetlands used by millions of waterfowl as they winter and return to the breeding grounds each year. The initiative also supports science, policy and outreach efforts important to waterfowl conservation.

The Southeast Wetlands Initiative is a crucial part of Ducks Unlimited's Rescue Our Wetlands Campaign, a seven-year, \$2-billion effort aimed at changing the face of conservation in North America. Rescue Our Wetlands is the largest wetlands and waterfowl conservation campaign in history.

Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.



**SOUTHERN
REGION**

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